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Implementation of human rights instruments

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their twenty-sixth meeting, held in Geneva from 23 to 27 June 2014, pursuant to Assembly resolution 57/202.

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Report of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their twenty-sixth meeting

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/202, requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly the reports of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their periodic meetings. The present document contains the report on the twenty-sixth meeting of the Chairs of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies, which was convened in Geneva from 23 to 27 June 2014. The meeting of the Chairs, convened annually pursuant to Assembly resolution 49/178, considered the implementation of Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, as well as follow-up to the recommendations of the twenty-fifth meeting of Chairs. The Chairs' decisions and recommendations are contained in section VII of the present report.

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I. Introduction

1. The twenty-sixth meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies was held in Geneva from 23 to 27 June 2014. The meetings are convened annually pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/178.

II. Organization of the meeting

2. The meeting was attended by the Chairs of the following bodies: Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Jose Francisco Cali Tzay); Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Zdzislaw Kedzia); Human Rights Committee (Sir Nigel Rodley); Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (Nicole Ameline); Committee on the Rights of the Child (Kirsten Sandberg); Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Francisco Carrion Mena); Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Malcolm Evans); Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Maria Soledad Cisternas Reyes); and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (Emmanuel Decaux). The Committee against Torture was represented by its Vice-Chair (Felice Gaer).

3. The Director of the Human Rights Treaties Division of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ibrahim Salama, opened the meeting and welcomed the Chairs. He proceeded with the election of officers, and made reference to the list provided by the Secretariat of former Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the annual meetings. Based on the principle of rotation, the Chair of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Malcolm Evans, was elected Chair-Rapporteur of the twenty-sixth meeting and the Chair of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, Emmanuel Decaux, was elected Vice-Chair by acclamation.

4. The Chair of the twenty-sixth meeting, informed participants that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was unfortunately unable to address the Chair in person. However, he invited the participants to view the videomessage of the High Commissioner.

5. In her videomessage, the High Commissioner congratulated the Chairs for placing the treaty bodies on the map as a system during the intergovernmental process on treaty body strengthening. She welcomed the natural alliance between treaty bodies and her Office which, together, had accomplished what many had deemed impossible — the first successful strengthening of the human rights treaty bodies in 40 years, for the benefit of right-holders — and considered treaty body strengthening a key achievement of her tenure. The High Commissioner emphasized that the treaty bodies and the Office were different and independent actors. The General Assembly had made this clear in its resolution 68/268 by conferring certain responsibilities on the treaty bodies and others on the OHCHR. She highlighted that the treaty bodies and the Office had aligned interests but distinct roles to play and that each would be judged separately in the Secretary-General's biennial report to the Assembly. The High Commissioner therefore encouraged the Chairs to continue their leadership role and reach conclusions on the subject of the alignment of working methods, in the agenda of the twenty-sixth meeting, for implementation by all treaty bodies, unless a committee would subsequently dissociate itself from the outcome.

6. In the full statement that was distributed, the High Commissioner added that throughout her tenure, there had been a very constructive relationship between treaty body members and members of her Office as they worked in tandem to further the goal of human rights for all. She called upon the Chairs to remain vigilant and attentive to the need to further this strong and constructive partnership against the background of isolated incidents in which the staff of the Office were not treated with dignity and respect.

7. The Chair thanked the High Commissioner for being a staunch defender of the work of the treaty bodies in her two consecutive terms. He then expressed his gratitude to Claudio Grossman, outgoing Chair of the twenty-fifth meeting of the Chairs, for his excellent leadership and commitment and for the electronic message he had sent to the participants at the twenty-sixth meeting.

8. In his message, Mr. Grossman emphasized that the twenty-sixth meeting of Chairs was of special importance for three reasons. First, it marked the closing of a year in which, for the first time, the treaty body system had profiled itself as a player on the international scene. Second, the meeting would test the Chairs' ability to maintain their sense of unity. Third, the meeting would measure the degree to which individual Chairs were able to exercise leadership vis-à-vis their own committees. Mr. Grossman recalled how, at their twenty-fifth meeting, the Chairs had articulated five principles which had influenced the treaty body strengthening process and its outcome in a concrete manner. He stressed how the Chairs, through the development of a joint position in Washington, D.C., in January 2014, immediately prior to the last round of intergovernmental negotiations, had exerted a positive and authoritative influence on the treaty body strengthening process. In his message, Mr. Grossman called upon his colleagues to preserve the visibility and space that had been created for the treaty bodies despite many odds. The onus was now on the Chairs, he stated, to seize the momentum that had been created to align the treaty bodies' working methods, not only because this was the mandate of the annual meeting of the Chairs, but also because it would increase accessibility, responsiveness, predictability and human rights protection for all, without discrimination.

9. The Chair of the twenty-sixth meeting introduced the provisional agenda and annotations (HRI/MC/2014/1), and the preliminary programme of work. He recalled that the mandate of the annual meeting of the Chairs was to streamline, rationalize and harmonize the treaty bodies' working methods and rules of procedure. At their twenty-fifth meeting, the Chairs had decided to place the possible alignment of the methodology for constructive dialogue with States parties and the possibility of a common format for concluding observations in the agenda of the twenty-sixth meeting of the Chairs. The General Assembly, in its resolution 68/268, had also encouraged the treaty bodies to align the methodology for their constructive dialogue (para. 5) and to adopt short, focused and concrete concluding observations (para. 6). In paragraph 1 of that resolution, the Assembly further encouraged the treaty bodies to offer the simplified reporting procedure to States parties. Since the simplified reporting procedure was intrinsically linked to the constructive dialogue and the concluding observations, it was also featured in the agenda of the twenty-sixth meeting.

10. The Chair informed the meeting that three notes had been prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as background to the discussions (HRI/MC/2014/2, HRI/MC/2014/3 and HRI/MC/2014/4). These

notes had been shared with all treaty body members 12 weeks prior to the annual meeting to enable all Chairs to hold consultations within the meetings of their respective committees during this period. He noted that this approach should help the Chairs reach a meaningful outcome at their twenty-sixth meeting.

11. The Chairs expressed interest in considering the problem of reprisals against persons cooperating with the treaty bodies and the visibility of the treaty body system, as well as follow-up to the joint statement, adopted by the Chairs at their twenty-fifth meeting, on the post-2015 development agenda (A/68/334, annex) under item 8 (other matters) and then adopted the agenda for the twenty-sixth meeting.

12. The Chairs then proceeded to discuss the periodicity and timing of the annual meeting of the Chairs. It was proposed that an additional meeting of the Chairs be organized between the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh meeting of the Chairs. The Chairs also discussed the possibility of holding an additional meeting involving members of treaty bodies. The Chairs also discussed the advantages and disadvantages of making a collective presentation of annual reports of the treaty bodies to the Third Committee of the General Assembly.

13. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was further requested to explore the possibility of holding the Chairs' meeting at the same time as the annual meeting of special procedures mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council.

14. The Chair informed participants that the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross had expressed interest in meeting the Chairs of the treaty bodies in the near future, an initiative warmly welcomed by all Chairs.

III. Follow-up to General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system and to the decisions taken at the twenty-fifth meeting of the Chairs of the treaty bodies pertaining to the harmonization of working methods

15. The Chairs unanimously expressed their satisfaction with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system. The majority of the Chairs also expressed their commitment to the implementation of that resolution.

16. Each Chair gave an overview of discussions within his or her respective committee on the subject. Committees that held sessions between April and June 2014 had discussed the matter during their session. Other committees had exchanged views by e-mail. A third group of committees had not yet had the opportunity to discuss General Assembly resolution 68/268.

17. The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child informed participants that discussions within the Committee had been highly positive regarding the alignment of the working methods pertaining to the constructive dialogue between the Committee and States parties and the concluding observations, while at the same time noting the challenge of producing short, focused and targeted concluding

observations, given the broad and comprehensive nature of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.[1] Regarding the simplified reporting procedure, she inquired about the availability of staff capacity of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to support this new procedure while at the same time addressing the backlog of reports of States parties under the standard reporting procedure.

18. The Chair of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances stressed that the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance[2] did not require periodic reports, although it did provide for the possibility, under article 29 (4), of the Committee's requesting States parties to provide additional information on the implementation of the Convention. The Chair further highlighted the fact that the small size of the membership of the Committee could prevent the Committee from applying working methods that were used by larger committees.

19. The Chair of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families informed other participants of the need to increase the number of ratifications of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families[3] and called upon all committees to take the provisions of the Convention and the work of the Committee into account when carrying out their respective mandates.

20. The Chair of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment welcomed the General Assembly resolution and in particular the additional resources granted to the Subcommittee secretariat and the capacity-building package contained in the resolution. Both would enhance the ability of the Subcommittee to carry out its mandate to build and enhance the capacity of national preventive mechanisms.

21. The Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, while highlighting the importance of striking a balance between unity and specificity, emphasized the momentum and opportunity provided by the resolution on treaty body strengthening and stressed the importance of mobilization by the entire treaty body system to swiftly implement the resolution. She called upon all treaty bodies to further simplify their working methods so as to facilitate State party compliance with reporting obligations. She also emphasized the need for treaty bodies to complement one another and to increase cooperation with other human rights mechanisms.

22. The Vice-Chair of the Committee against Torture informed the participants of the Committee's planned review of its working methods in November 2014. The review would enable the Committee to adopt an informed position on the working methods, in the agenda of the twenty-sixth meeting of the Chairs and to assess the Committee's current use of the simplified reporting procedure (referred to by the Committee under the term "List of issues prior to reporting" (LOIPR) in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

23. The Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed the Committee's positive response to the resolution. He also shared the

[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.
[2] General Assembly resolution 61/177, annex.
[3] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2220, No. 39481.

view of the Committee that building a coherent treaty body system would require such time as would be needed to develop a common vision for the system. He further emphasized the importance of prior discussions of items in the agenda of the meetings of the Chairs at committee level.

24. The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities noted with satisfaction that key principles and views of the treaty bodies were reflected in General Assembly resolution 68/268 and informed the meeting that she would brief the Committee on the discussions held at the twenty-sixth meeting of the Chairs at the Committee's upcoming session in September 2014. She also suggested that, in addition to addressing procedural consistency among the committees, the meeting of the Chairs should discuss substantive and jurisprudential consistency.

25. The Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination informed the meeting that the Committee had not yet discussed the items in the agenda of the twenty-sixth meeting of the Chairs and would do so at its next session, in August 2014.

26. The Chair of the Human Rights Committee mentioned that the Committee was positive about the General Assembly resolution, in particular the resources granted to address the backlog of State party reports and communications. He further informed the meeting that the Committee had not yet had the opportunity to consider the items in the agenda of the twenty-sixth meeting but would do so at its next session.

27. In the discussion that followed, participants requested to be informed about the 2015 calendar of treaty body meetings as well as the resources available pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/268 to support the work of the treaty bodies.

A. Simplified reporting procedure

28. On 23 and 24 June 2014, the Chairs considered the simplified reporting procedure. The Chair drew the attention of participants to the note by the secretariat on the simplified reporting procedure (HRI/MC/2014/4). This background paper described existing practices of treaty bodies that had adopted a simplified reporting procedure and considered parameters for harmonizing and generalizing the simplified reporting procedure. The Chair flagged the linkages between the simplified reporting procedure and the concluding observations in terms of bringing greater focus to the State party review. He asked participants to bear in mind the word limits on State party documentation introduced in paragraph 16 of resolution 68/268 and noted the repeated requests in paragraphs 1 and 16 of the resolution to limit the number of questions asked in the list of issues prior to reporting. The Chair then invited the Chairs of the committees using the simplified reporting procedure to share their experience.

29. The Vice-Chair of the Committee against Torture informed the meeting that the Committee had adopted the simplified reporting procedure as a matter of necessity in order to address the fact that a number of States parties did not respond to the standard list of issues in time, as well as for practical reasons related to the translation of documents. Although the Committee considered applying the simplified reporting procedure to long overdue initial reports, in addition to periodic reports, it had not yet done so in order to provide States parties with an opportunity to submit a comprehensive initial report under the standard reporting procedure. The

majority of States parties to the Convention against Torture had responded positively to the simplified reporting procedure. However, the need for a significant amount of support by the staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in preparing the list of issues under the simplified reporting procedure was underlined. The Committee against Torture representative further highlighted the challenge of receiving timely replies from States parties to the lists of issues prior to reporting and called for a standard and consistent approach to addressing this challenge. Since the lists of issues prior to reporting sent by the Committee against Torture to States parties consisted of from 35 to 45 questions, the Committee did not deem it feasible to limit the number of questions to 25, as suggested in the background note on the simplified reporting procedure and the report of the High Commissioner on strengthening the treaty body system (A/66/860). While recommending that all treaty bodies consider adopting the procedure, the Committee against Torture representative highlighted the need for a detailed qualitative evaluation of the simplified reporting procedure and indicated that the Committee would carry out such an evaluation, as had been requested at a previous meeting of the Chairs.

30. The Chair of the Human Rights Committee informed the meeting that the Human Rights Committee had been offering the simplified reporting procedure since 2009 to States parties with significantly overdue reports. He highlighted the fact that a clear timeline needed to be developed to ensure the predictability of the submission deadline for the replies to the lists of issues prior to reporting and the date of review of the State party report under the simplified reporting procedure. Treaty-specific guidelines remained necessary as long as reports were submitted under the standard reporting procedure. The Human Rights Committee was not envisaging applying the simplified reporting procedure to initial reports. The Chair of the Human Rights Committee further informed the meeting that the Committee could endorse the suggested limit of 25 questions if consultations among its members resulted in consent thereto. He further informed the meeting that the Human Rights Committee intended to review its use of the simplified reporting procedure in 2015.

31. The Chair of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families informed the meeting that it had experienced significant improvements in its efficiency as a result of using the simplified reporting procedure. State party reports submitted under the simplified reporting procedure were more focused and concise, as they addressed the questions asked by the Committee. He emphasized that support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights staff was critical for the effective functioning of the simplified reporting procedure.

32. The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities informed the meeting that the State party reports presently reviewed by the Committee were initial reports submitted under the standard reporting procedure. Hence, the Committee did not yet have any experience with the implementation of the simplified reporting procedure. However, the Committee was encouraging States parties to present periodic reports under the simplified reporting procedure.

33. In the discussion that followed, it was noted that there was no standard simplified reporting procedure but, rather, a variety of practices depending on how the procedure was being applied by individual committees. The Chairs noted that it

could be useful to develop a common framework and timeline for the procedure which could be used by all treaty bodies.

34. The Chairs underscored the importance of the contribution of United Nations entities, civil society organizations and national human rights institutions in the preparation of the list of issues under the simplified reporting procedure and emphasized the need to ensure effective participation of those actors in the process.

35. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights responded to questions from the Chairs regarding the practical implications of the simplified reporting procedure for the scheduling of reviews, the workload involved, the availability of staff support, and the sequencing of the different phases of the simplified reporting procedure. It was highlighted that treaty bodies did not need to delay their offer to make the simplified reporting procedure available until the backlog was cleared.

36. Overall, the Chairs welcomed the use of the simplified reporting procedure for periodic reporting obligations. The majority of Chairs were of the view that initial reports of States parties should ideally be submitted under the standard reporting procedure, although, exceptionally, the procedure could be beneficial as an option for States parties with long-overdue initial reports.

37. The Chairs of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child informed the meeting that their Committees looked favourably upon the simplified reporting procedure and were likely to make the procedure available to States parties within a reasonable time frame. The Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights informed the meeting that the Committee planned to make the procedure available to a limited number of States parties on a pilot basis.

38. While noting that the list of issues prior to reporting should be concise and focused, the Chairs were generally of the view that a limit on the number of questions asked was not practical and that the figure of 25 could serve as an indicative guideline rather than a rule. In response thereto, the Chair of the meeting suggested that committees be guided by an objective assessment of how many questions a State party could respond to in light of the new word limit stipulated in paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 68/268.

39. The Chairs of the committees that were already using the simplified reporting procedure informed the meeting that there were no separate guidelines for States reporting under the simplified reporting procedure and that States parties were advised to take into account the treaty-specific guidelines that applied to the standard reporting procedure. The Chairs were of the view that some committees might wish to revise their reporting guidelines in light of the simplified reporting procedure and the new word limit for State party reports.

40. The Chairs reviewed the draft common format of the list of issues under the simplified reporting procedure in annex III to the note by the Secretariat (HRI/MC/2014/4). While noting the usefulness of a common format for lists of issues prior to reporting, the Chairs stressed that the format should serve only as guidance for consideration by treaty bodies and that individual treaty bodies should retain the flexibility to structure the lists of issues in accordance with their needs and the situation in the State party under review.

B. Constructive dialogue

41. On 24 and 25 June 2014, the Chairs considered the possibility of aligning the methodology for the constructive dialogue of treaty bodies with States parties. The Chair drew the attention of participants to the note by the Secretariat on the constructive dialogue between treaty bodies and States parties (HRI/MC/2014/3). He noted that, at the twenty-fifth meeting of the Chairs, it had been decided to look into the matters of written guidelines, country task forces, the clustering of questions by themes, equitable allocation of time between treaty body members and the State party, and the attention given to previous concluding observations during the constructive dialogue. A comparative analysis of existing practices and a proposal for common guidelines on the constructive dialogue were presented in the background note. During the discussions, the Chairs agreed that the term "constructive dialogue" applied only to the oral face-to-face dialogue between the State party delegation and the committee.

42. The Chairs expressed support for the objectives set out in paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 68/268, namely, to make the dialogue more effective, maximizing the use of the time available and allowing for a more interactive and productive dialogue with States parties, while underscoring the need for flexibility to enable each committee to shape the dialogue in accordance with its specificity.

43. The Chairs recalled that, during the dialogue, the Chair of the treaty body carried the responsibility for ensuring effective time management. This would include guiding, as necessary, the duration of interventions by State party delegates as well as treaty body members. They also agreed that, to the extent possible and with due respect for the discretion of the Chairs in this regard, treaty bodies would in principle conduct their face-to-face dialogue with States parties over two three-hour meetings and over two consecutive working days. States parties would also be provided with an indication of the time available for opening and closing statements.

44. In addition to the above points of agreement, the Chairs highlighted the positions of their respective committees with respect to the use of country task forces and the structuring of the constructive dialogue within thematic clusters. The Chairs of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Committee expressed the view that the use of country teams (teams of treaty body members, also known as country task forces) which were coordinated by one or more country rapporteurs had enhanced the quality of the dialogue. The Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights informed the meeting that the Committee had recently introduced the system of country rapporteurs on a trial basis and that it would be premature for the Committee to introduce a system of country teams at this point. The Chairs of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which did not currently use country teams, stated that any changes to the current methodology would require careful consideration and deliberation within their Committees. The Chairs of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, which did not currently use country teams, informed the meeting that their Committees looked favourably upon the possibility of introducing them. The Chair of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances stressed that the size of the Committee could be a constraint and underscored that

the composition of country teams should take into account not only geographical and gender balance, but also language skills.

45. The Chairs of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances stated that their Committees had already structured the constructive dialogue with States parties according to thematic clusters. The Chair of the Human Rights Committee noted that the Committee might consider this possibility, provided that it retained the discretion to vary the format of the clusters in response to the specific situation of a State party. The Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination indicated that the Committee did not currently cluster questions in the dialogue. The Chair of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families informed the meeting that the Committee structured its constructive dialogue by articles in the Convention and was not envisaging a change in this regard.

46. The Chairs acknowledged the encouragement given by the General Assembly, in paragraph 5 of its resolution 68/268, to the treaty bodies with respect to their elaborating an aligned methodology for the constructive dialogue. After discussion, the Chairs invited the treaty bodies to consider the guidance note for States parties on the constructive dialogue with the human rights treaty bodies, contained in annex I to the present report, with a view to making it available to States parties.

C. Concluding observations

47. On 26 June 2014, the Chairs discussed the note by the Secretariat on concluding observations (HRI/MC/2014/2), including the proposal for a draft aligned format for concluding observations, as contained in the annex to the note.

48. The Chairs welcomed the call for short, focused and concrete concluding observations as contained in paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 68/268. Some Chairs stressed, however, that concluding observations needed to respect the specificities of the respective committees.

49. A discussion was held on whether the issues raised in the concluding observations should be the subject of discussion during the dialogue, with some Chairs in favour of this approach and others indicating that replies to the list of issues could also serve as the basis for concerns contained in the concluding observations, even if they were not raised during the dialogue. The Chairs also shared views on the extent to which the implementation by the State party of previous concluding observations should be reflected when concluding observations were being drafted.

50. The Chairs agreed that their respective treaty bodies should be encouraged to formulate recommendations that provided specific and actionable guidance for States parties on measures for implementing treaty obligations, including time-bound targets or any priorities, where relevant. The Chairs thought that the inclusion of indicators for measuring State party implementation of the specific treaty provision in the concluding observations raised issues that required further reflection.

51. The Chairs also agreed that concluding observations should identify relevant articles of the treaty and that subheadings in concluding observations could prove meaningful. The Chairs further agreed that, to the extent possible, committees

should be encouraged to limit the use of standard paragraphs for procedural efficiency or when, in specific instances, it was desirable in order to ensure the consistency of jurisprudence and/or equal treatment of States parties.

52. The Chairs felt that it would be unhelpful to impose a word limit of 3,300 words to concluding observations on periodic reports. The Chairs also discussed the suggestion that recommendations be prioritized, taking into account the capacity of States parties to meaningfully implement measures within a given reporting cycle and the need to balance immediate and longer-term priorities, in terms of both urgency and the feasibility of implementation. While some committees de facto prioritized recommendations within the context of their follow-up procedure, a majority of committees considered that seeking to prioritize recommendations in this fashion might prove complex and counterproductive.

53. Furthermore, while the Chairs agreed that recommendations of other human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms should be considered during the State party review, with a view to strengthening the complementarity of human rights mechanisms, the systematic cross-referencing of relevant recommendations of other treaty bodies and mechanisms in the concluding observations was considered by some Chairs to raise questions of practicality.

54. The Chairs acknowledged the encouragement given by the General Assembly, in paragraph 6 of its resolution 68/268, to the treaty bodies with respect to their developing common guidelines for the elaboration of concluding observations. After discussion, the Chairs invited the treaty bodies to consider the framework for the concluding observations, as contained in annex II of the present report. The Chairs underscored that treaty bodies should retain the discretion to adapt the framework so as to reflect the specificities of each treaty.

IV. Informal consultations with States parties

55. On 25 June 2014, the Chairs held informal consultations with States parties regarding General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system.

56. The Chair of the twenty-sixth meeting of the Chairs welcomed the opportunity for a renewed partnership with States parties and expressed support for the implementation by States parties of the General Assembly resolution on treaty body strengthening. He welcomed the opportunities that arose from the adoption of the resolution, in particular the additional meeting time needed to reduce the backlog in consideration of State party reports and individual communications.

57. The other Chairs presented the views of their respective committees on the resolution, underscoring the independence and impartiality of their members and pointing to specificities of their respective conventions. Overall, they expressed their readiness to align the distinct working methods, based on good practices, and to make their procedures more efficient, taking into account the distinct nature of each treaty. Specifically, the Chairs regarded the resolution as an instrument for simplifying the work of States parties when drafting the reports and welcomed the capacity-building and technical assistance package approved by the General Assembly. Increased visibility, strengthened implementation of the conventions and enhanced capacity of national protection systems were identified as joint objectives.

58. The States parties considered the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/268 a milestone. Expeditious implementation of its provisions was perceived as essential for achieving strengthened human rights protection on the ground. The States parties called upon treaty bodies to swiftly reduce the backlog, harmonize their working methods, including the generalization of the simplified reporting procedure, and use modern technology such as webcasting and videoconferencing. Several States parties also called on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to assist States in fulfilling their reporting obligations through capacity-building efforts.

59. Several States parties stressed the distinct roles of treaty bodies, States parties and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in relation to the resolution and expressed the need for all actors to fulfil the expectations that it had conveyed, as a matter of priority.

60. On 27 June 2014, the Chairs held informal consultations by videoconference, facilitated by the New York Office of the Office of the High Commissioner, with delegates from States without permanent representation in Geneva. Participating delegations welcomed the opportunity to engage with the Chairs and highlighted the benefits for States without permanent representation in Geneva of being able to interact with treaty bodies in New York.

61. Delegates inquired about action taken by the treaty bodies to make concluding observations more focused and the dialogue more balanced. The delegates further requested that all treaty bodies make the simplified reporting procedure available to facilitate reporting by small States facing capacity constraints. The question was also raised about the implementation of the Addis Ababa guidelines (A/67/222, annex I) and their possible revision in the future.

V. Informal consultations with civil society organizations and the International Coordinating Committee of national human rights institutions

62. On 26 May 2014, the Chairs held informal consultations with civil society organizations and the International Coordinating Committee of national human rights institutions. In a joint statement, 18 civil society organizations welcomed the outcome of the treaty body strengthening process. They acknowledged the important role played by treaty body members in the process, and highlighted a number of priority areas for consideration by the Chairs.

63. Civil society representatives further underscored the importance of the alignment of working methods to facilitate the engagement of civil society organizations with the treaty bodies. They expressed concern that some recommendations made at previous meetings of the Chairs were yet to be taken forward and expressed the hope that the adoption of the General Assembly resolution would provide a renewed impetus for action. Civil society representatives called upon all treaty bodies to make the simplified reporting procedure available, while at the same time clearly defining how non-governmental organizations could provide input into this process. Civil society participants in the meeting also stressed the importance for all treaty bodies to hold closed meetings with civil society organizations. They further requested that treaty bodies explore the possibility of meeting in dual

chambers and encouraged the treaty bodies to develop new working methods which would optimize their meeting time, in light of the significant increase of the workload of the treaty bodies expected in the coming years.

64. Some civil society representatives expressed concern over what they perceived as a lack of political will by some States parties to comply with their reporting obligations. In this context, they called upon treaty bodies to review the situation of States parties in the absence of a report, particularly in cases of grave human rights violations.

65. Civil society representatives further welcomed the strong condemnation in General Assembly resolution 68/268, paragraph 8, of all acts of reprisals and intimidation against individuals and groups for their contribution to the work of the treaty bodies and encouraged the Chairs to adopt effective measures in this respect.

66. Treaty bodies were also strongly encouraged to endorse the Addis Ababa guidelines and undertake measures to ensure that all members adhered to them.

67. Suggestions were made by civil society representatives regarding the accessibility of and equal participation in activities of treaty bodies for persons with disabilities. While the systematic videorecording and webcasting of interactive dialogues enabled all national stakeholders to monitor and participate in the work of the treaty bodies, only the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provided accessibility measures such as captioning and sign-language interpretation. The treaty bodies were also encouraged to evaluate the accessibility of their information and communication, with particular attention to the format of files uploaded on the websites, and to generalize the green policy, already practised by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, by which electronic documents were used instead of hard copies.

68. The Chairs welcomed the valuable contribution of civil society organizations to the work of the treaty bodies, whether through submissions, inputs, hearings or briefings. They called upon civil society organizations to continue to participate in State reviews as well as in the implementation of recommendations emanating from the treaty bodies.

VI. Other matters

A. Reprisals against individuals and groups engaging or seeking to engage with the treaty bodies

69. On 27 June, the Chairs met with a representative of the Special Procedures Branch of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mara Bustelo. Ms. Bustelo mentioned that the special procedures had benefited greatly from the work of the treaty bodies, particularly for their country visits, and expressed the hope that both mechanisms would reinforce each other through more systematic cross-referencing.

70. At the request of the Chairs, Ms. Bustelo informed the meeting of measures adopted by the special procedures to address reprisals against individuals and groups and individuals cooperating with the United Nations human rights mechanisms. These measures included the development of a protocol for handling

individual cases of reprisals, the serving of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders as a focal point for cases of reprisals, and training for new mandate-holders on how to prevent reprisals when handling communications and conducting country visits.

71. Stressing the importance of a system-wide approach across all human rights mechanisms to addressing reprisals, the Chairs expressed interest in developing a common treaty body policy against reprisals and decided to make the topic a standing item of the agenda of the annual meeting of the Chairs. They also recommended that all treaty bodies that had not yet done so establish a focal point on reprisals and decided to consider and adopt a joint policy on reprisals at the twenty-seventh meeting of the Chairs in 2015.

B. Meeting with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Branch of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

72. On 25 June 2014, the Chairs met with the Chief of the Universal Periodic Review Branch of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Shahrzad Tadjbakhsh, who highlighted the complementarity between the work of the treaty bodies and the universal periodic review, noting that the concluding observations of treaty bodies constituted a significant component of Universal Periodic Review discussions and recommendations, and highlighting the numerous Universal Periodic Review recommendations to States that they ratify human rights treaties. She also briefed the Chairs on the integrated approach of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to follow up on recommendations by all human rights mechanisms — the Universal Periodic Review, the treaty bodies and the Special Procedures — as well as by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

73. The Chairs expressed concern over instances in which Universal Periodic Review recommendations sourced from treaty body concluding observations were rejected by States. Ms. Tadjbakhsh clarified that the Universal Periodic Review did not allow for States to reject recommendations. Rather, it provided the option for States to note recommendations that they deemed could not be implemented within a given Universal Periodic Review cycle. The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities noted the need to improve the physical accessibility to the work of the Human Rights Council of persons with disabilities.

VII. Conclusions, decisions and recommendations

74. At their twenty-sixth meeting, the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies adopted the following conclusions, decisions and recommendations:

I. The role of the Chairs in achieving the goals of General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system

75. The Chairs expressed the commitment of the human rights treaty bodies to further developing their work as a system by continuing to review good practices regarding the application of rules of procedure and working methods in their ongoing efforts towards strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the treaty bodies.

76. In this context, the Chairs welcomed the encouragement given by the General Assembly to the treaty bodies in respect of their continuing to enhance the role of the Chairs in relation to procedural matters, including with respect to formulating conclusions on issues related to working methods, generalizing good practices and methodologies among all treaty bodies, ensuring coherence across the treaty bodies and standardizing working methods.

77. The Chairs reaffirmed their previously recognized roles in facilitating representation and coordinating common activities, including matters such as the consideration and adoption of joint statements, while respecting the autonomy and specificity of each treaty body. The Chairs also reiterated the decision taken at previous meetings of the Chairs that the Chairs should adopt measures on working methods and procedural matters that were common across the treaty body system and had been discussed previously within each committee, and that such measures should be implemented by all treaty bodies unless a committee subsequently dissociated itself from them.

II. Harmonization of treaty bodies' working methods

78. The Chairs examined the issue of working methods included in the agenda of the twenty-sixth meeting with a view to identifying good practices and adopted the following:

79. The Chairs welcome the outcome of the work of the General Assembly on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, culminating in the adoption of Assembly resolution 68/268.

80. The Chairs recognize and reiterate that the success of the strengthening process depends on the constructive partnership among all stakeholders, working towards that common goal. In this spirit, the Chairs are committed to fully considering the contents of the resolution both together and within their respective committees. As they do so, the Chairs support an approach that prioritizes, in the first instance, the realization of one of the principal purposes of the resolution: to promote the enhancement of States' compliance with their human rights commitments.

81. That goal cannot be achieved without the prompt and full allocation of additional meeting time to the treaty bodies, accompanied by the additional levels of staffing and support as envisaged by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/268. The elimination of the current backlog of reports and individual communications, which treaty bodies must undertake in addition to their other important functions, is

an essential aspect of engaging States parties more effectively as well as contributing more effectively to the protection of human rights.

82. The Chairs consider that, in accordance with the outcome of General Assembly resolution 68/268, all savings generated from the implementation of the resolution and the additional funding should be made available to the treaty body system so as to supplement existing budgetary and extrabudgetary resources. The Chairs therefore would like to seek clarification regarding the future arrangements with respect to meeting time and staff support and to receive a plan of action demonstrating how the backlog of work will be addressed within the envisaged time frames.

83. The Chairs consider it necessary to place before their committees a series of proposals for alignments which, once they have had the opportunity to reflect on them, will be taken forward at the twenty-seventh meeting of the Chairs. The Chairs also recognize their responsibility for continuing efforts aimed at aligning the methods of work of treaty bodies.

84. The Chairs note with appreciation the documentation (HRI/MC/2014/2, HRI/MC/2014/3 and HRI/MC/2014/4) prepared to assist them in their reflections on how they might achieve the strengthening of the treaty body system, as recommended by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/268, as well as comments made during the consultations with stakeholders at their twenty-sixth annual meeting.

85. Treaty bodies may wish to draw upon the recommendations of other human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms in the drafting of the list of issues (prior to reporting), in the dialogue, and, where appropriate, in the concluding observations, so as to strengthen the coherence and complementarity of human rights mechanisms.

A. Simplified reporting procedure

86. The Chairs draw the committees' attention to the call by the General Assembly in resolution 68/268, paragraph 1, to make available to States a simplified reporting procedure.

87. The Chairs also recognize that as of 1 January 2015, periodic reports will be subject to the limit on word length set out in paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 68/268. In response to the changed situation, the Chairs endorse the view that committees that examine periodic reports should consider making such a procedure available after 1 January 2015.

88. They further endorse the view that committees might consider making a simplified process available for the consideration of initial reports in those specific instances where they believe this would enhance the constructive dialogue.

89. The Chairs believe that such a simplified process should involve the highlighting by Committees of those questions or themes that they believe it would be most advantageous for the reporting State to focus on in its written report, without prejudice to the possibility of other issues of importance being raised at a subsequent point within the process by the State or by the treaty body.

90. To assist them in doing so, the Chairs would draw the attention of the treaty bodies to the examples provided by the practice of the Committee against Torture and the Human Rights Committee, believing that those examples encompass

elements that could be usefully drawn upon in the construction of country-specific reporting guidance.

91. The Chairs encourage the treaty bodies that have benefited from the simplified reporting procedure to evaluate its advantages and challenges in order that the best practices in this regard may be replicated by all committees.

92. The Chairs also recognize that States may choose not to take advantage of a simplified process but may wish instead to continue to submit reports in accordance with the reporting guidelines of each treaty body. The Chairs believe that each treaty body should consider revising their existing reporting guidelines with a view to ensuring that States parties are able to submit reports that conform both to those guidelines and to the word limits as set out in paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 68/268.

93. The committees may wish to consider the need for sequencing the stages of the reporting procedure, including the adoption of the list of issues, so as to facilitate the timely and productive review of State party reports.

B. Constructive dialogue

94. The Chairs share the objectives as set out in paragraph 5 of resolution 68/268, which encompass making the dialogue more effective, maximizing the use of the time available and allowing for a more interactive and productive dialogue with States parties. The Chairs underline the need for each treaty body to have flexibility in conducting the dialogue in accordance with the specificities of each convention.

95. Recalling that the Chair of each committee is responsible for ensuring that the dialogue is conducted in a constructive, effective and efficient manner, the Chairs invite their committees to consider the following as elements of such an approach.

96. That the dialogue normally be conducted in two sessions of up to three hours and, when possible, be held over two consecutive working days. An additional session of up to a further three hours may be convened exceptionally when the committee considers it appropriate and feasible.

97. That States parties be provided with information on the structure of the dialogue and an indication of the time limits for their opening statement (15-30 minutes) and for their closing remarks (up to 10 minutes), with a view to saving time for the direct exchange between the State party's delegation and committee members.

98. That the use of country teams, coordinated by one or more committee members, has been shown to have merit as a means of enhancing the quality and coverage of the dialogue in those committee that have adopted this approach.

99. That time limits be used, when necessary, for the interventions of both treaty body members and States parties under the guidance of the Chair.

100. That the dialogue concerning periodic reports focus on the issues or thematic priorities identified by the treaty bodies. Such priority issues may include previous concluding observations, matters identified in the list of issues, and possible new developments in the State party which have come to the Committee's attention.

101. That as an aid and assistance to States parties, a guidance note on the constructive dialogue should be made available to States parties, a draft of which is contained in annex I to this report.

C. Concluding observations

102. The Chairs support the call by the General Assembly in resolution 68/268, paragraph 6, for concluding observations that are short, focused and concrete, bearing in mind the specificities of the respective committees and their mandates.

103. The Chairs further believe that it would be helpful for the issues raised in the concluding observations to have been the subject of discussion during the dialogue and consider that this should usually be the case.

104. The Chairs encourage the treaty bodies to formulate recommendations that provide specific and actionable guidance on measures for implementing treaty obligations, including time-bound targets or any priorities, where relevant. In this context, the Chairs invite the treaty bodies to identify the relevant articles of the treaty in question in their concluding observations and to formulate guidance on any legislative or structural changes that might be required by the State party. Where they act as an aid to clarity, the Chairs welcome the standardized use of subheadings in concluding observations.

105. The treaty bodies are encouraged to use standard paragraphs only when it is procedurally convenient or when, in specific instances, it is desirable in order to ensure the consistency of jurisprudence and/or equal treatment of States parties. Treaty bodies are discouraged from including in their concluding observations standard paragraphs of a routine nature, unless necessary.

106. Inspired by paragraph 6 of resolution 68/268, the Chairs endorse the framework for concluding observations as contained in annex II to this report, to be understood in the light of the need for each treaty body to exercise the framework flexibly so that their concluding observations respect and reflect the specificities of each convention and treaty body.

III. Reprisals

107. The Chairs strongly condemn intimidation and reprisals against persons who are seeking to engage with the treaty bodies.

108. The Chairs also welcome the strong condemnation by the General Assembly, in paragraph 8 of its resolution 68/268, of all acts of intimidation and reprisals towards individuals and groups for their contribution to the work of the treaty bodies, and support the Assembly's calling upon States to take all appropriate action to prevent and eliminate such human rights violations.

109. The Chairs invite all treaty bodies that have not yet done so, to establish a rapporteur for reprisals who would take such steps as are necessary to prevent, protect against, investigate and pursue accountability for acts of intimidation or reprisals.

110. The Chairs further decide to include reprisals as a standing item in the agenda of the annual meeting of the Chairs and to engage with other bodies that are working to protect human rights defenders and other right-holders from reprisals.

111. With a view to developing a system-wide approach towards reprisals, the Chairs further decide to develop and adopt a joint treaty body policy against reprisals at their twenty-seventh meeting. Such a policy should be part of a more general approach to reprisals by the relevant United Nations human rights mechanisms.

IV. Late reporting and non-reporting by States parties

112. The Chairs reaffirm the decision taken at the twenty-fifth meeting of the Chairs to include late and non-reporting by States parties as a standing item in the agenda of the annual meeting of the Chairs and to include the status of late and non-reporting in their report on the annual meeting. The Chairs welcome the implementation of the recommendation made at their twenty-fifth meeting that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights place information on timely, late and non-reporting by States parties on its website. They recommended that this web page be maintained and updated on an ongoing basis.

V. Annual meetings of the Chairs of the treaty bodies

113. The Chairs recommend that the scheduling of their annual meeting be re-examined so as to ensure that it is held at the most appropriate point in time in the annual cycle of work of the treaty body system and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

114. In addition, the Chairs recommend that a second additional meeting involving members of treaty bodies be convened each year.

VI. Agenda for the twenty-seventh meeting of the Chairs

115. At their twenty-sixth meeting, the Chairs decided that the twenty-seventh annual meeting will have, inter alia, the following items in its agenda:

(a) Follow-up to the substantive items discussed at their twenty-sixth annual meeting concerning the harmonization of working methods;

(b) A common policy by the treaty body system on intimidation and reprisals;

(c) The possible alignment of the consultation process for the elaboration of general comments;

(d) Late and non-reporting by States parties, as deferred from the twenty-sixth annual meeting;

(e) Review of the developments in regard to the Chairs' joint statement on the post-2015 development agenda, adopted at the twenty-fifth annual meeting;

(f) Assistance in the area of capacity-building and technical cooperation, in light of General Assembly resolution 68/268.

VII. Venue of the annual meeting of the Chairs

116. Geneva has been the traditional venue of the annual meeting of the Chairs. In 2010, the Chairs decided to bring their meeting to the regions. In this context, meetings have been held in Brussels (2010) and Addis Ababa (2012). In 2013, the Chairs' meeting was convened in New York to allow for the engagement of the Chairs with the intergovernmental process on treaty body strengthening.

117. In order to maintain the dialogue with States and other stakeholders in New York, the Chairs recommend that their annual meeting be held in New York in the years in which the Secretary-General's biennial progress report on treaty body strengthening is submitted to the General Assembly.

118. The Chairs further recommend that the meeting alternate among Geneva, New York and the regions. In this regard, the Chairs recommend that the twenty-seventh meeting be held in New York at a time to be confirmed, subject to available resources.

VIII. Chair-Rapporteur and Vice-Chair-Rapporteur of the twenty-seventh meeting

119. The Chairs decide that, in accordance with the principle of rotation and inclusion of new committees in the list, the Chair-Rapporteur of the twenty-seventh meeting of the Chairs, in 2015, will be the Chair of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, and the Vice-Chair-Rapporteur will be the Chair of the Human Rights Committee.

Annex I

Guidance note for States parties on the constructive dialogue with the human rights treaty bodies

The human rights treaty bodies consider States parties' reports by examining them through a process that includes a constructive dialogue with representatives of the State party concerned. That dialogue helps treaty bodies understand and review the human rights situation in the State party as it pertains to the treaty concerned. It also serves as a basis for the concluding observations of the treaty bodies. The constructive dialogue offers an opportunity for States parties to receive expert advice on compliance with their international human rights commitments, which assists them in their implementation of the treaties at the national level.

Composition of State party delegations for the constructive dialogue

The treaty bodies encourage the State party delegation for the constructive dialogue to be led by a senior State figure with a responsibility for the implementation of the respective treaty. The treaty bodies also encourage States parties to include in their delegations, as far as possible, representatives with relevant expertise from key executive and other authorities responsible for the implementation of the treaty concerned, with due regard for expertise and gender balance. The State party may also wish to consider including in its delegation representatives of other relevant institutions or entities.

The reports of States parties are considered by treaty bodies in the order determined by the treaty body concerned, which is usually the order of submission. Once the date for consideration of a State party report has been set, an invitation is sent to the relevant authorities at least six months in advance of the proposed meeting. The date of the session during which the constructive dialogue is to be held may be altered only in exceptional circumstances, as determined by the Committee.

Country rapporteurs and country teams of treaty bodies

Treaty bodies may appoint members to serve as country rapporteurs, who may then act as focal points for introducing and coordinating the constructive oral dialogue with the State party delegation. Treaty bodies may also decide to mandate a broader group of members to act in this capacity. Expertise, language, and geographical and gender balance should, inter alia, be taken into account in the composition of such groups.

Country rapporteurs (or their equivalents within groups established for this purpose) will usually exercise primary responsibility for the preparation of the constructive oral dialogue with a State party. This includes prior consultation and coordination regarding any priority areas or issues to be considered, with a view to encouraging members of the committee to avoid both repetition and gaps in the coverage given. Supplementary questions may be posed by any treaty body member as necessary.

In accordance with the guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies ("the Addis Ababa guidelines") (annex I to A/67/222 and Corr.1) and the rules of the treaty bodies, treaty body members who are nationals of the State party under review do not participate in the entire process, including the constructive dialogue and the adoption of concluding observations.

Role of the Chairs of treaty bodies during the constructive dialogue

The Chairs of the treaty bodies are responsible for ensuring that the dialogue with the State party is conducted in an interactive, effective, efficient and respectful manner.

Format of the constructive dialogue

The constructive dialogue with States parties will normally be conducted in two sessions of up to three hours and will usually be held over two consecutive working days. An additional session of up to a further three hours may be convened exceptionally when the Committee considers it appropriate and feasible.

Focus of the dialogue

During the dialogue concerning an initial report, the treaty bodies seek to cover most or all of the treaty provisions, as well as any thematic priorities or challenges that the Committee has identified. The dialogue concerning periodic reports is focused on the issues or thematic priorities identified by the treaty bodies. Such priority issues may include previous concluding observations, challenges identified in the list of issues, and possible new developments in the State party which have come to the Committee's attention.

Clustering of the dialogue

Questions posed by treaty body members may be clustered by articles, themes or sub-themes, reflecting the substantive provisions of the respective treaty. Following the responses of the State party, further rounds of the dialogue are held until all clusters have been covered, bearing in mind the need to give the State party reasonable time to answer the questions posed by the treaty body members. Treaty body members may pose follow-up questions to the responses of the State party.

Time allocations

The Chairs of the treaty bodies are responsible for conducting proceedings in a timely manner, including ensuring respect for any time limits that have been set. States parties will be provided with information on the structure of the dialogue and an indication of the time limits for their opening statement (15-30 minutes) and for their closing remarks (up to 10 minutes), with a view to saving time for the direct exchange between the State party's delegation and Committee members.

Languages used during the constructive dialogue

Pursuant to paragraph 30 of General Assembly resolution 68/268, on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, the treaty bodies will use three official working languages, with a fourth official language provided on an exceptional basis to facilitate communication among treaty body members, as determined by the committee concerned and without prejudice to the right of each State party to interact, both orally and in writing, with the treaty bodies in any of the six official United Nations languages.

Should a State party delegation wish to bring its own interpreters to interpret into a language other than one of the official languages, this should be brought to the attention of the secretariat at least four weeks prior to the constructive dialogue.

Public nature of meetings

The constructive dialogue with treaty bodies is held in public meetings. The United Nations should provide meeting summaries, prepared by the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, and summary records in one of the working languages of the treaty body.

Observers, such as representatives of the United Nations and of civil society, academics and others, may attend public meetings, as long as participants have received advance accreditation. It is not necessary for an observer to be accredited with the Economic and Social Council in order to attend the public meetings of treaty bodies or to submit information to them.

Webcasting, audiotaping and filming of public meetings is permitted, when authorized, and as long as this does not interfere with the dialogue. More information regarding the United Nations media policy and accreditation is available on the website of the United Nations Office at Geneva (unog.ch).

The principle of accessibility and reasonable accommodation must be applied in the context of the constructive dialogue, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/268, paragraph 29. This requires the adoption of various measures, such as, inter alia, access to physical space, to information, to communication and to sign-language interpretation.

Background documentation

Background documentation pertaining to State party reviews by treaty bodies is accessible on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (www.ohchr.org). No copies are distributed in the meeting room.

Accreditation

States parties are requested to submit a list of members of their delegation by note verbale to the respective treaty body secretariat no later than two weeks prior to the start of the session, so that arrangements can be made for the issuance of the

ground passes needed to enter the United Nations premises. Members of delegations with disabilities can identify her or his accommodation needs, as explained in a guidance note (available from http://goo.gl/g6f6Gh). Subject to confirmation by the respective treaty body secretariats, the ground passes may generally be collected on the Friday prior to the start of the respective treaty body session at the security desks at Palais Wilson or the Pregny Gate at the Palais des Nations.

Technical briefings by the secretariats of the treaty bodies

The secretariats of the treaty bodies conduct technical briefings for States parties prior to each treaty body session to provide any further information that may be required by States parties prior to the constructive dialogue.

Annex II

Framework for the concluding observations

A. Introduction

The introduction should describe the stages of the Committee's consideration of the report of the State party, including the dates of the submission of reports, related documents, meetings, the adoption of the concluding observations, and the composition of the delegations.

It should also include any reflections on the nature of the reporting process as a whole and any other introductory matters.

B. Positive aspects

This section provides an opportunity to recognize relevant positive measures, including legislative, administrative, programmatic or institutional advancements, and ratifications of international instruments, that the State party has taken during the reporting period.

Progress made in the implementation of previous recommendations made by the Committee might also be noted in this section.

C. Principal matters of concern and recommendations

At the beginning of this section, the Committee could address structural obstacles or other factors that impact upon the implementation of the convention, should this be appropriate.

This section may be organized according to clusters that may take account of measures taken regarding previous concluding observations and may take into account cross-cutting issues, subject to the needs of the committee.

Concerns and recommendations could be clustered under articles, themes, headings or subheadings.

Issues raised in the concluding observations should preferably have been discussed during the dialogue.

Concerns should be stated succinctly and followed by recommendations set out in bold typeface.

Recommendations should avoid unnecessary repetition of information already included in the statement of the concern.

The concern and/or the recommendation could reference previous recommendations of the Committee when appropriate (e.g., where the previous recommendation was implemented only partially or not at all).

Recommendations should be formulated so as to provide specific actionable guidance and might indicate time frames for the implementation of measures.

Recommendations requiring priority attention, owing to the gravity of the human rights concerns to which they relate, may be specifically identified.

Committees are encouraged to take account of relevant recommendations made by the United Nations human rights system.

D. Implementation of recommendations, dissemination and follow-up

In this section, the Committee addresses the need to ensure that the State party takes all appropriate measures to ensure that the present recommendations are fully implemented by, inter alia, transmitting them, in accessible format, to all concerned authorities and institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

The Committee might also request the State party to involve international agencies, national human rights institutions and civil society actors, including non-governmental organizations, in the implementation of concluding observations when this appears appropriate.

The Committee may also identify recommendations that are to be subject to specific follow-up procedures, and set out what they are to comprise.

The Committee may also request that the State party report on steps taken to implement the recommendations in the context of any follow-up procedure that exists.

The Committee should also set out the due date for the submission of the next report.

The Committee may also comment on arrangement for the dissemination of the concluding observations.